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Stanic On Antimissile Defense

...It seems that the Soviet Union has decided to carry out the plan of organizing the antimissile defense of the biggest cities -- of Moscow first. This has induced the Americans to propose that both big powers waive the building of such systems, which would surely be enormously expensive.

There were rumors that the Soviets had heard the US proposal with interest, but Premier Kosygin, talking to journalists during his recent visit to London did not confirm this interest. He refuted Western commentaries on the building of antimissile systems in connection with the armaments race or the topic of disarmament.

In Kosygin's opinion the building of an antimissile system cannot be considered in the same manner as the other matters resulting from the armaments race because this is a defensive action which threatens no one.

It cannot be denied that this statement is correct, although it is also certain that the balance between the two military giants would be disturbed if only one possessed an antimissile system. Military experts think that a change in the balance would be very dangerous. Therefore such a definitely defensive action as the building of an antimissile system does not effect only those who build it, but also the enemy, even the entire world.

A great deal has always been said about the antimissile defense, and both sides have **thought** that this was just propaganda destined to tranquilize the public. To judge from everything, a really effective anti-missile defense is an entirely new invention. On 20 February General Kurochkin in all seriousness told the public at a press conference in Moscow for the first time that an effective antimissile defense was indeed possible.

It has been learned from other sources that in the Soviet Union -- and obviously also in the United States -- essential progress has recently been made in detecting enemy missiles. Former means would have enabled the Soviet specialists to detect missiles when they were about halfway to the target on Soviet territory, which means 10-15 minutes prior to the explosion.

Much is often said about buttons -- assertedly these have only to be pushed and the missiles or antimissile missiles start flying. Actually, it is much more complicated. Experts assert that at least five minutes is necessary from the moment the signal is given to the moment that the anti-

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missile is launched; this is true only if the missile is already in the final stage of readiness. If they are in the first or second state-- as is usual -- it takes much more time for them to start. This means that even under the most ideal conditions the ten minutes between the detection of enemy missiles to their explosion are obviously insufficient for defense missiles to stop and destroy them in time.

Only recently, it seems, a method has been found through which enemy missiles can be detected two minutes after their firing, which doubles the time for the organization of defense. This is the essential progress which transforms antimissile defense from wishful thinking to reality. At present, antimissile defense has ceased to be only a tranquilizer for the public, and is now a technically accomplished, although extraordinarily expensive affair.

For the time being, it is said, one cannot organize antimissile defense for an entire state, only for several cities. Technically it would be possible to organize it for an entire state, even if this were as large as the Soviet Union or the United States, but all this is so enormously expensive that there is no such state in the world able to afford such luxury. The only really possible goal for the time being is the building of an antimissile system which could more or less defend individual cities.

This is precisely why the United States was in a very unpleasant position in connection with the antimissile defense. Since there is no possibility of defending the entire territory it must select only several cities. Some US diplomat in Moscow said that no US Government and no US President would prepare a list of the cities to be defended because the decision to defend only some cities, whichever they were, would mark the end of any government or President who made this decision.

Even the well-known proposal by Art Buchwald that all bigger cities send girls to a contest at which the most beautiful ones would be selected and a defense system would then be built for those cities whose representatives won the contest -- even this proposal -- would very probably not convince the Americans to give up their right of defense in favor of others.

Regardless of whether this dilemma is really as difficult as the US diplomat sees it, the US Government is still in a predicament precisely because it has no way to defend the entire state. This is also obvious from the US proposal that the United States and the USSR waive the building of such systems. With respect to this proposal, the political difficulties which the US Government faces certainly played a much more important role than ordinary love for peace.

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The Soviet Union has much fewer political difficulties, primarily because it is considerably easier for the Soviet Union to keep a secret from the domestic public, while the public reaction to the disclosure of a plan for the defense of individual cities would not be such as is feared in the United States. At any rate, there are fewer political prejudices against the building of a defense system for several cities in the Soviet Union, although the other significant difficulty still remains -- the new enormous material burden....

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by J. STANIC, Special Correspondent  
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